

14 February 2013

Dear CPC folks,

I write as someone who attended nearly all of the original Morrison Farm Planning Committee meetings (though I was not an official member). I was quite familiar with the Master Plan that resulted. I am also a neighbor to the Morrison Property; I live at 109 Concord Road. Walter Foster will remember my involvement with the initial MF work.

I have several areas of concern; I learned about the proposal only very recently, and though I should have weighed in before now, here I am.

- I am at loss to understand why I were never included in what little current Morrison Farm Committee outreach there may have been. More important, as a neighbor to the property and currently proposed plan, I have never received a single piece of information about the plan, nor have other neighbors/abutters. This lack of outreach/engagement with neighbors is an egregious error in the committee's process. And though I have tried, it has been impossible to get any information from the Town website; minutes are unavailable; the MFIC is not even listed under "Boards and Committees." I actually had no idea the group was as far along as it apparently is until a friend told me about the proposal. Net: the thoughts and responses of people who will live in direct relationship with whatever projects happen on the property have had neither appraisal nor voice. The one exception was last March's public meeting, which I did attend.

The rest of my comments are in no particular order:

- If one goal is to create a "living history" resource, then I would expect a much greater focus on the actually historical use of the property — agriculture. And I would hope for an emphasis on agriculture for current use. This doesn't mean there can't be other uses (e.g., classes, gatherings, etc.). I do wonder if "function hall" really belongs . . .
- What appears to be the assignment of the management of the property to the Recreation Department gives me pause. I understand it's a Town resource, but why would Natural Resources not be an equal partner in management of the property (unless that's true and I'm unaware of it)? Why would we not consider creating an Agricultural Committee or other Town group, comprised of Town staff and residents with particular interest/expertise to oversee at least the ag aspects of the property, for instance?

- There are changes to the plan from the Master Planning outlines. I'm sure I don't even know what all of them are, but what information I do have indicates that:
 - this new proposed "nature and history center" building eats up community garden space and is disconnected from the other buildings (whose future isn't clear to me)
 - there are many more parking spots than in the original plan; if they are paved with asphalt, there are major concerns about toxic pollution of the soil from auto-related runoff; in addition, the more cars allowed deep into the property, the greater the impact of exhaust emissions on air, soil, water, and anyone, such as gardeners, on the property. Yuck (and you can quote me). The more parking spots, the less acreage potential for future agriculture uses. And I'm just saying: with the effects of climate change, in 20 years we may finally have learned to value our soil, its growing potential, and any arable acreage more than we value driving and parking
- The nature and history center may be a fine long-term goal, but as I look at the current sketch (that's all I've got), it seems to me premature and potentially overreaching for so soon in an implementation phase. The programming for such a large building should have a LOT more public vetting and input before we go rushing into building something this significant.
- Why would we devote this space to the Recreation Department's meeting and planning needs? Programming is great, and I don't doubt the department is cramped now, but I really do NOT want the property to become an extension of Town Hall. There are other Town buildings that seem more aligned with such administrative uses.
- In what I've seen, there are no particular disposition plans for the barn or the farmhouse. What is to become of them, other than storage spaces? Why not begin amendments with something such as an ADA-compliant bathroom in the farmhouse for those using the property?
- The sketch I've seen does not indicate the location of the mowed playing field. Where is that to be located?
- Are there budgets created for maintenance, programming, etc.?

Apologies if I've opined on incorrect facts; I'm working with very little information, as I noted in the beginning. I'm sorry to have to say it, but this is testament to a fundamental lack of public engagement in the process of the MFIC's work.

Thanks for your consideration.

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